



U.S. Immigration
and Customs
Enforcement

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News Release

EXTRADITED COLOMBIAN MONEY LAUNDERER FOR NORTE VALLE CARTEL SENTENCED TO TEN YEARS IN FEDERAL PRISON

NEW YORK, NY -- Martin D. Ficke, Special Agent in Charge of the New York office of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and DAVID N. KELLEY, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York, announced that PABLO TRUJILLO, a money launderer from Bogota, Colombia, was sentenced today by United States District Court Judge LEWIS A. KAPLAN to a term of imprisonment of 10 years, the maximum allowed by law, for conspiracy to commit money laundering.

The sentence resulted from TRUJILLO's conviction in August 2003 for his participation in a scheme to launder approximately \$1.7 million in drug proceeds collected in the United States through bank accounts he operated in Colombia.

The charges in this case resulted from "Operation Wirecutter," a joint investigation conducted by ICE's El Dorado Task Force and Colombian law enforcement into the laundering of millions of dollars in narcotics proceeds from the United States to drug traffickers in Colombia.

According to the evidence at trial and at sentencing, in 2001, TRUJILLO worked at a company called Sierras del Nilo ("Sierras") in Bogota, Colombia, a company that laundered the narcotics proceeds of Juan Carlos Ramirez-Abadia, a/k/a "Chupetta," an indicted fugitive who is a leader of the Norte Valle Cartel. While working at Sierras, TRUJILLO operated several accounts in Colombian banks in the names of Sierras and other Colombian companies.

During this same period, the testimony demonstrated that TRUJILLO acted as a "money broker" who arranged for the picking up of cash drug proceeds in the United States and then receiving the proceeds after they were wired into bank accounts under his control in Colombia. According to the evidence at trial, money brokers such as TRUJILLO serve as intermediaries between the Colombian drug traffickers and the drug dealers in the United States.

TRUJILLO instructed others to transfer the drug money collected in the United States into accounts TRUJILLO operated in Colombia. TRUJILLO then paid an equivalent amount in pesos in Colombia, less a commission TRUJILLO earned based on a percentage of the laundered funds.

From June 2001 through January 2002, TRUJILLO facilitated the repatriation of approximately \$1.7 million in narcotics proceeds into Colombian accounts. TRUJILLO also utilized numeric and verbal

codes to arrange for the transfer of funds and paid exorbitant fees to individuals involved in these money laundering transactions.

TRUJILLO was among seven defendants extradited from Colombia to date as part of Operation Wirecutter.

These extraditions are believed to be the first from Colombia to the United States solely on charges of laundering narcotics proceeds. To date, the international investigation has resulted in 42 arrests in the United States and Colombia, seizures of more than \$7 million in narcotics proceeds and 725 kilograms of cocaine.

All 42 defendants have been convicted by plea or trial.

Ficke praised the outstanding prosecutorial efforts of the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of New York and thanked the Colombian Department of Administrative Security for its assistance in the investigation.

Assistant United States Attorney NEIL M. BAROFSKY led the prosecution.

#ICE#

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) was established in March 2003 as the largest investigative arm of the Department of Homeland Security. ICE is comprised of five integrated divisions that form a 21st century law enforcement agency with broad responsibilities for a number of key homeland security priorities